

How Does Personal Well-being Vary by Sex, Disability, Ethnicity and Religion?

Coverage: **UK**

Date: **27 March 2015**

Geographical Area: **UK**

Theme: **People and Places**

How does personal well-being vary by sex, disability, ethnicity and religion?

We started collecting data on personal well-being in April 2011 and have now made available a combined 3 year dataset, which provides a much larger sample size and allows for more detailed analysis for subgroups such as religion and lower levels of geography, for example, Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas. We also published [data tables](#) and [maps](#). We have explored this dataset to find out how personal well-being ratings compare for different equality groups: sex, disability, ethnicity and religion.

The findings show different equality groups have different personal well-being ratings. Women are more likely than men to find the things that they do in their lives are worthwhile, but are also more likely to report higher anxiety. People who report being disabled have lower personal well-being scores than people without a disability. Some ethnic minority and religious minority groups reported lower personal well-being scores than others. This is likely to be due to a number of factors, including differences in social and economic characteristics.

As well as providing information on the different personal well-being ratings, the data provides important information on the scale of differences among the different groups examined and benchmark information on which the success of future interventions could potentially be assessed.

Why evaluate personal well-being by equality groups?

Generally, people in the UK are reasonably content. Current average ratings for the four Office for National Statistics (ONS) measures of personal well-being are:

- 7.5 points out of 10 for life satisfaction
- 7.7 out of 10 for feeling that what one does in life is worthwhile
- 7.3 out of 10 for happiness yesterday
- 3.0 out of 10 for anxiety yesterday

Exploring differences for different population groups is important as it informs debate about why inequalities exist and can help policy makers target policy at groups in most need.

How does personal well-being compare for the different equality groups?

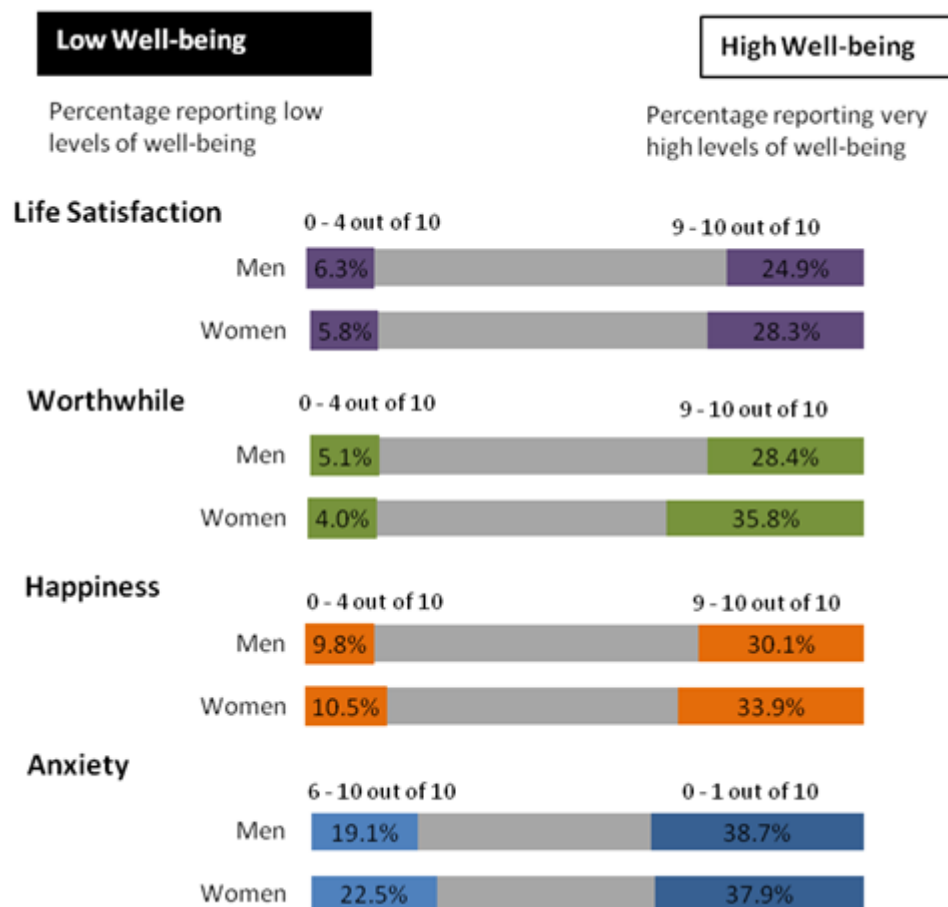
Sex

There are differences in how men and women rate their personal well-being. Average ratings show that women have slightly higher life satisfaction (7.5 compared with 7.4 out of 10 for men), consider their activities to be more worthwhile (7.8 compared with 7.6) and rate their happiness slightly higher than men (7.4 compared with 7.3). However, women also rate their anxiety levels significantly higher than men (3.1 compared with 2.9).

It is useful to look at the proportions of people who rated their well-being at the highest and lowest levels. Figure 1 shows that women are far more likely to report feeling the highest ratings of things in their life being worthwhile than men (35.8% compared to 28.4%). Further, when reporting how happy they were yesterday, women are over-represented in the highest and lowest proportions. This indicates that women are more prone to feeling and/or reporting more extremes in happiness than men.

Figure 1: Percentages rating personal well-being at highest and lowest levels: by sex, 2011 to 2014 (1,2,3)

United Kingdom



Source: Annual Population Survey (APS) - Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Adults aged 16 and over were asked 'Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?', 'Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?', 'Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?' and 'Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?' where 0 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely'.
2. Data from April 2011 to March 2014.
3. All data weighted.

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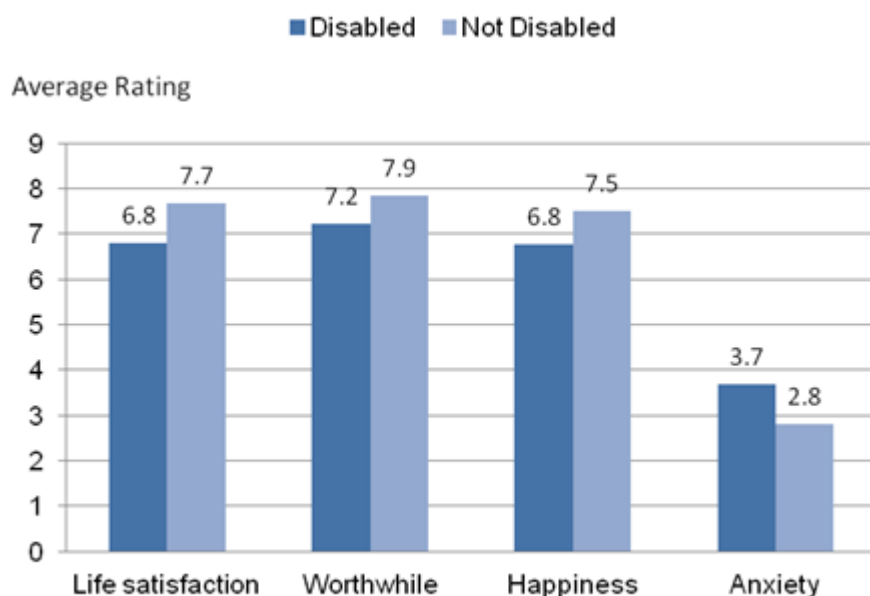
Disability and Health

There are also differences in how disabled people rate their personal well-being compared to those without a disability. People who report a disability rate their life satisfaction (6.8 out of 10 compared to 7.7), worthwhile (7.2 out of 10 compared to 7.9) and happiness yesterday (6.8 out of 10 compared

to 7.5) lower than those who do not report a disability. They are also more likely to report feeling anxious yesterday (3.7 compared to 2.8) (Figure 2). The large distinctions are considerable with personal well-being data, indicating a sizeable difference in how personal well-being is experienced between the two groups.

Figure 2: Average personal well-being ratings: by disability, 2011 to 2014 (1,2,3)

United Kingdom



Source: Annual Population Survey (APS) - Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Adults aged 16 and over were asked 'Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?', 'Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?', 'Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?' and 'Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?' where 0 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely'.
2. Data from April 2011 to March 2014.
3. All data weighted.

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This pattern is repeated with self-reported health across the population; people who reported bad health had lower ratings of life satisfaction, feelings that things were worthwhile, levels of happiness, and higher ratings of anxiety, on average, than those who said their health was good (ONS, 2013c).

We (2013c) found that when other characteristics were held equal, self-reported health has the strongest association with all the measures of personal well-being. This is not surprising; self-reported health is based on people's views of their health rather than objective information. As such, it is likely to reflect people's emotional as well as physical state and the degree of optimism they

have about their health. Similarly, people's well-being ratings reflect their emotional state and their optimism about life (ONS, 2013b).

Ethnicity

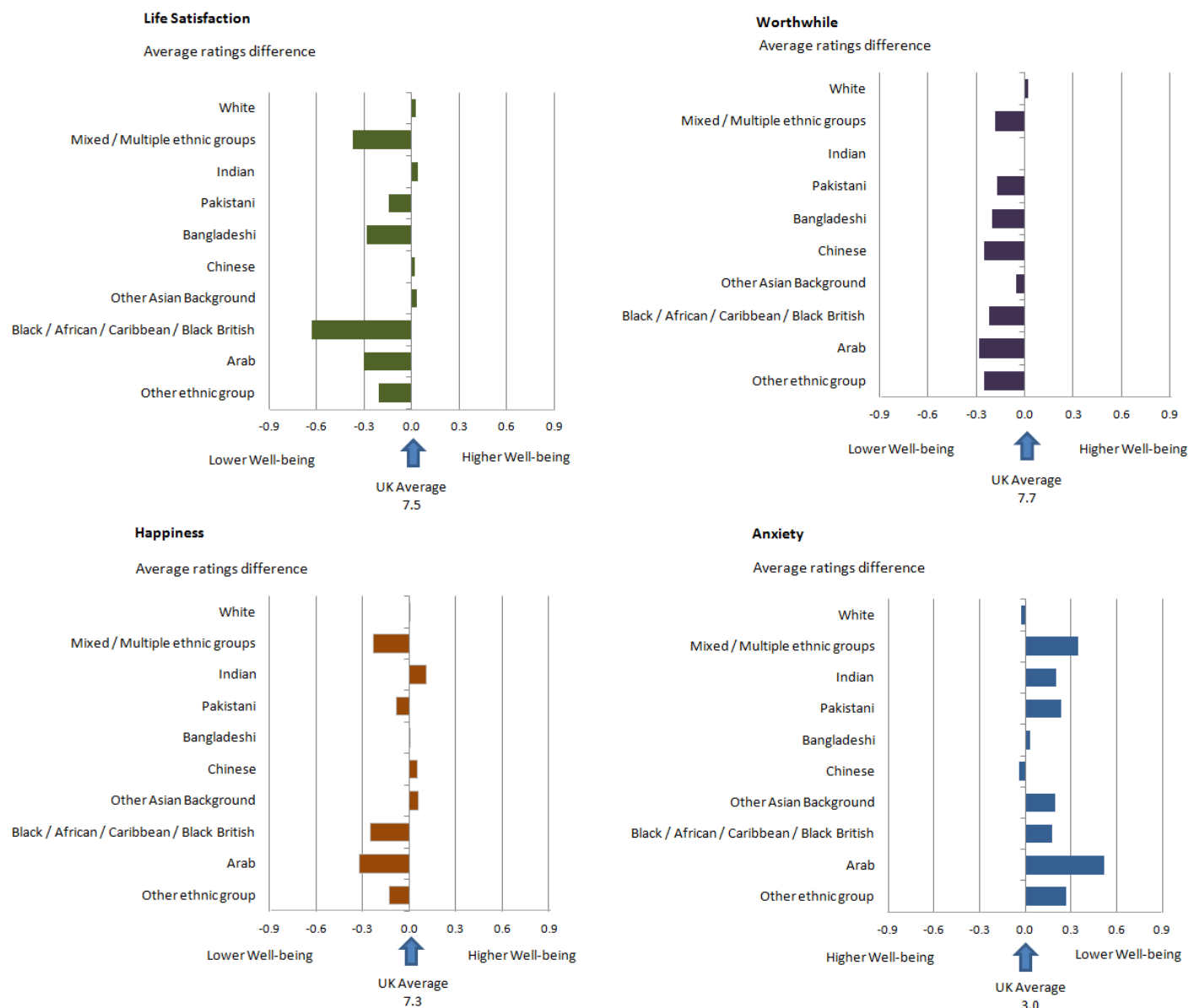
Consistent with our previous reports (ONS, 2013a), people from the Black ethnic group are, on average, least satisfied with their lives out of all the ethnic groups in the UK (6.8 out of 10) (Figure 3). Mixed/multiple ethnic groups (7.1 out of 10) and the Arab ethnic group (7.2 out of 10) also gave lower ratings, on average. The Other Asian, Indian, White and Chinese ethnic groups were most likely to report being satisfied with their lives (all 7.5 out of 10).

The White ethnic group are most likely to feel that the things they do in life are worthwhile (7.7 out of 10). The Arab ethnic group (7.4 out of 10), the Other ethnic group (7.5 out of 10) and the Chinese ethnic group (7.5 out of 10) gave the lowest average ratings.

Day-to-day emotions including happiness and anxiety, also differ by ethnic group. The Arab ethnic group (3.6 out of 10) and the Mixed or multiple ethnic group (3.4 out of 10) are the most anxious, compared to the Chinese and the White ethnic groups (3.0 out of 10) who are least likely to have felt anxious the previous day. The Arab ethnic group (7.0 out of 10) and the Black ethnic group (7.1 out of 10) are the least likely to report feeling happy yesterday. The Indian and the Other Asian ethnic groups are most likely to report feeling happy (7.4 out of 10).

Figure 3: Average personal well-being ratings compared to UK averages: by ethnic group, 2011 to 2014 (1,2,3,4)

United Kingdom



Source: Annual Population Survey (APS) - Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Adults aged 16 and over were asked 'Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?', 'Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?', 'Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?' and 'Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?' where 0 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely'.
2. Data from April 2011 to March 2014.
3. All data weighted.
4. The Gypsy/Traveller/Irish Traveller group have not been included in analysis due to small sample sizes.
5. Please click on the image to view a larger version.

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Religion

Religion is an important defining characteristic of people's identity. Christians have the highest average life satisfaction ratings (7.5 out of 10). People who identify as Muslim and Buddhist and those who identify with no religion are least satisfied with their lives (7.3 out of 10) (Figure 4).

Christians and Jewish people are most likely to report that they feel that the things they do in life are worthwhile (both 7.8 out of 10). Whereas, Muslims and those who identify with no religion, are the least likely to feel that the things they do in life are worthwhile (both 7.5 out of 10).

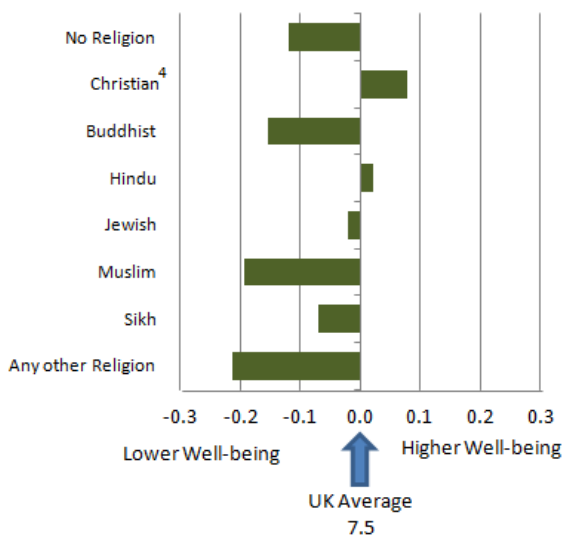
Day-to-day emotions also vary for religious groups. Hindus and Christians are more likely to report being happy (7.5 and 7.4 out of 10 respectively), whereas those who identify with no religion and Muslims are less likely to report being happy (both 7.2 out of 10). Conversely, those who identify with no religion, along with Christians, are also less likely to report feeling anxious (3.0 out of 10), compared to people who identify as Jewish, Muslim, Any other religion and Hindu, who report the highest averages for anxiety (3.3 out of 10).

Figure 4: Average personal well-being ratings compared to UK averages: by religion, 2011 to 2014 (1,2,3)

United Kingdom

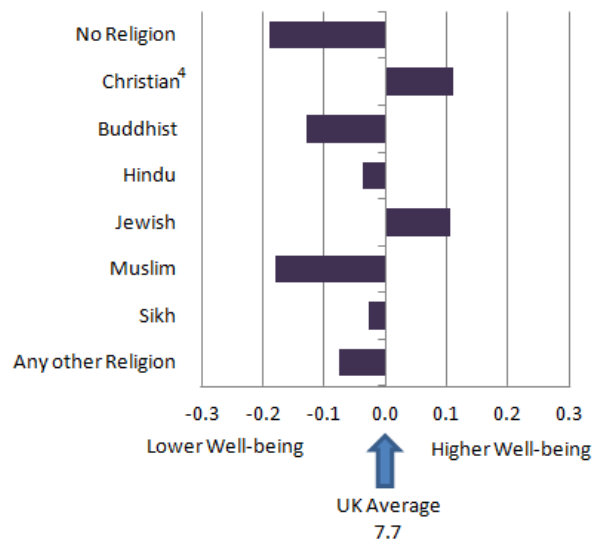
Life Satisfaction

Average ratings difference



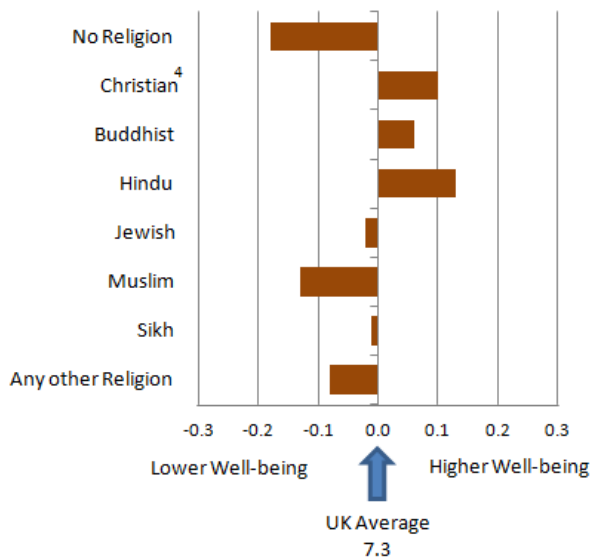
Worthwhile

Average ratings difference



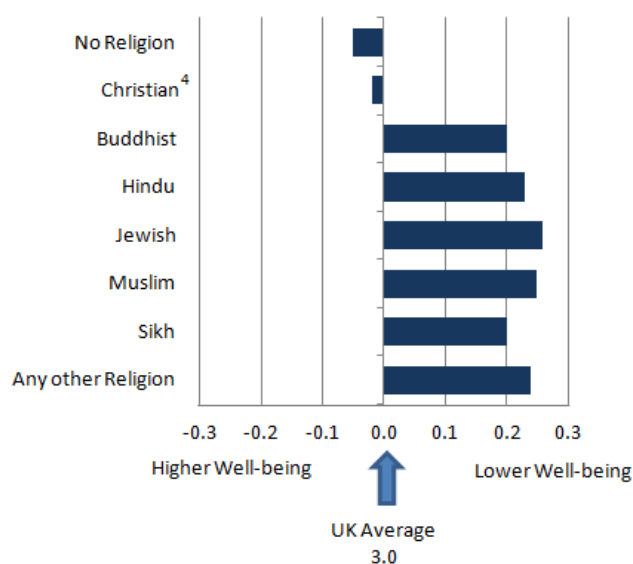
Happiness

Average ratings difference



Anxiety

Average ratings difference



Source: Annual Population Survey (APS) - Office for National Statistics

Notes:

- Adults aged 16 and over were asked 'Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?', 'Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?', 'Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?' and 'Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?' where 0 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely'.
- Data from April 2011 to March 2014.

3. All data weighted.
4. All denominations.
5. Please click on the image to view a larger version.

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Why might personal well-being ratings be higher for some equality groups than others?

There are distinct differences in the average ratings between equality groups. The varied responses could, in part, reflect the way different people respond to questions, the different circumstances that people find themselves in, or other characteristics that are common within the equality group, such as age.

In order to determine the individual impact a personal characteristic or circumstance can have on personal well-being more complicated analysis is required. In 2013 we carried out a regression analysis and found that when all else was kept equal self-reported health had the strongest association with all the measures of personal well-being, the second strongest association was employment status and the third was relationship status. As such, if people from different equality groups were more likely to have low self-reported health, be unemployed, or single, this may explain some of the variation in personal well-being ratings (ONS, 2013c).

However, the analysis also found that, after taking into account personal characteristics and circumstances, there was evidence that factors such as an individual's sex, ethnic group and religious affiliation had an impact on personal well-being ratings in different ways, albeit on a smaller scale (ONS, 2013c).

Where can I find out more?

If you'd like to find out more about the latest personal well-being statistics, please explore our new [reference tables](#) and [maps](#) or see our [publications](#). We also have a range of census publications on [religion and ethnicity](#).

References

1. [OECD \(2013\)](#) OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being, OECD Publishing
2. [ONS \(2013a\)](#) Differences in well-being by ethnicity
3. [ONS \(2013b\)](#) Personal Well-being in the UK 2012/13
4. [ONS \(2013c\)](#) Measuring National Well-being – What matters most to Personal Well-being?
5. [ONS \(2014\)](#) Personal Well-being in the UK 2013/14

Background notes

1. Since April 2011, APS has included 4 questions which are used to monitor personal well-being in the UK:
 - Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
 - Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?
 - Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?
 - Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?
2. The data analysed in this report are derived from a customised, weighted 3 year combined dataset from April 2011 to March 2014. All data can be found in the [reference tables](#).
3. Findings reported here are based on survey estimates and are subject to a degree of uncertainty. They should therefore be interpreted as providing a good estimate, rather than an exact measure of personal well-being in the UK. There is more information about how the statistics are produced and implications for the accuracy of the estimates, in section 8 of [Personal Well-being in the UK 2013/14](#).
4. For ease of reference the majority of this publication refers to averages given by the sample respondents. This does not account for variability between groups. We cannot assume that just because the sample has a certain rating of personal well-being, everyone with that characteristic will give the same rating. Further the direction of causation is not implied. There is more information about how the statistics are produced and implications for the accuracy of the estimates in section 8 of [Personal Well-being in the UK 2013/14](#).
5. The highest levels of personal well-being for life satisfaction, worthwhile and happiness are defined as 9 or 10 out of 10. For reported anxiety, ratings of 0 or 1 out of 10 are used because lower levels of anxiety suggest better personal well-being. Lowest levels of personal well-being are defined as ratings of 0 to 4 for life satisfaction, worthwhile and happiness. For reported anxiety, ratings of 6 to 10 are used because higher levels of anxiety suggest lower personal well-being.
6. It is important to note that people who report a disability are a diverse group of people which includes those with a disability that substantially limits their day-to-day activities, as well as those with a disability that limits the type or amount of work they do, but does not limit their day-to-day activities.
7. The Black ethnic group is made up of Black, African, Caribbean and Black British people.
8. Caution is advised when considering the Arab ethnic group as sample sizes are small, as such confidence intervals are large.
9. The APS asks “what is your religion?” and gathers information on religious affiliation, that is how we connect or identify with a religion, irrespective of actual practise or belief. Religion is a many sided concept and there are other aspects of religion such as religious belief, religious

practice or belonging that are not covered in this analysis. Further information can be found on our [Guidance and Methodology](#) pages.

10. Regression analysis – a statistical technique which analyses variation in well-being outcomes by specific characteristics and circumstances, while holding all other characteristics equal.
11. The Gypsy / Traveller / Irish Traveller group have not been included in analysis due to small sample size.
12. All analysis is done on more than 1 decimal place.
13. Differences in personal well-being estimates are described only where they are statistically significant, based on non-overlapping 95 per cent confidence intervals. That is, where the change is not likely to be only due to variations in sampling.
14. Approved researchers can access the datasets at the [UK Data Archive](#).
15. If you have comments on the ONS approach to measuring personal well-being and/ or the presentation of the personal well-being data, please email us at personal.wellbeing@ons.gsi.gov.uk.
16. The data analysed in this report was collected from the Annual Population Survey (APS) which is the largest constituent survey of the Integrated Household Survey. The sample size of the 3 year APS dataset is approximately 305,000 adults aged 16 and over and living in residential accommodation in the UK (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). Data used are weighted to be representative of the population and to take account of the fact that responses made on behalf of other household members are not accepted.
17. The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

18. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available by visiting www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html or from the Media Relations Office email: media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk

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